

**For Immediate Release:** Wednesday, April 12, 2017

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**EMPIRE STATE DEVELOPMENT ANNOUNCES START OF CONSTRUCTION ON HOLY CHILDHOOD’S NEW SPECIAL TOUCH BAKERY IN ROCHESTER**

*$2 Million 20,000 Square Foot Bakery Will Create Up to 40 New Jobs*

*The Investment in this Project Complements “Finger Lakes Forward” – The  Region’s Successful Economic Blueprint Aimed at Growing  the Economy and Creating New Opportunities*

Empire State Development (ESD) today announced that construction is underway on the new Special Touch Bakery in Rochester, following a ceremonial “Sledgehammer Swinging” event. The expanded facility, which will be operated by Holy Childhood, will offer unique choices for people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The project will create more than 25 jobs in year one and up to 40 by year five of its operation; and the fully-integrated environment will offer competitive, community-based employment and training opportunities where co-workers with and without disabilities will work side by side.

**Empire State Development President, CEO & President Howard Zemsky said,** “Supporting community endeavors like Holy Childhood's Special Touch Bakery creates dozens of paying jobs for people living with intellectual and developmental disabilities in the Finger Lakes region. The bakery’s new facility will serve economic opportunity to its workers and, with the capacity to increase pie production, serve even bigger portions to Special Touch fans."

The new bakery will expand upon legacy pie-baking operations that have been underway as vocational training at Holy Childhood for more than 30 years. It will become a separately incorporated not-for-profit corporation focused on food production.  Additionally, a major component of the operation will be workforce development. The facility, which is expected to open in the fall, will be located on Mount Read Boulevard in Rochester.

**Donna Dedee, President and CEO of Holy Childhood said,** “We are grateful for this significant investment in the expansion of the Special Touch Bakery. The operation will be a tremendous community asset; not only will it enable us to exponentially increase pie production and create new jobs and training opportunities, but it will provide skills to people who are most in need of opportunities for work in our community. So many community business partners are part of this model initiative which marries human service mission with business entrepreneurship.”

Special Touch Bakery began in the early 1980’s in a small school kitchen as an activity for students. Now, this $2.6 million expansion project will give Holy Childhood the opportunity to further reinvent one of its most successful assets. To assist Holy Childhood with building the state of the art facility, ESD, through the Finger Lakes Regional Economic Development Council, has offered the project a grant of up to $481,000.

**FLREDC Co-Chairs, Monroe Community College President Anne Kress and Wegmans Food Markets CEO Danny Wegman said, FLREDC Co-Chairs, said, “**The FLREDC is strongly committed to supporting projects such as this in an effort to grow jobs as part of the overall Finger Lakes Forward strategy. For many years now, Holy Childhood and its Special Touch Bakery have been such an important part of our community. We applaud this new facility which will create solid opportunities for many in the region as the business continues to grow.”

In addition to making its well-known pies, Special Touch Bakery serves as an opportunity for adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities to learn food production and food service skills while earning a paycheck.  The new facility will also allow the bakery to substantially increase pie production.  Palmer Food Services will serve as one of the bakery’s distribution partners in this venture, which will enable the bakery to expand regionally and eventually nationwide.

**State Assembly Majority Leader Joe Morelle said,** “The Holy Childhood's Special Touch Bakery is an incredible community asset that is empowering and utilizing the talents of all people in our community, including those with different abilities. This expansion and investment will further advance our efforts to build a more equal and inclusive community and ensure that all people are able to participate in the economic resurgence of our region.”

**State Senator Joe Robach said,** "Today’s announcement that New York State and Empire State Development will invest $2 million in the creation of the new Special Touch Bakery, operated by Holy Childhood, is something we can all be proud of. By offering opportunities where those with intellectual and developmental disabilities can work side by side with non-disabled co-workers ensures that this state investment will enrich the lives of the entire community."

Holy Childhood serves more than 200 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Services include individualized education, vocations training skills, transition training and more.

For more about Holy Childhood click [here.](http://www.holychildhood.org/)

**Accelerating Finger Lakes Forward**

Today’s announcement complements “Finger Lakes Forward,” the region’s comprehensive blueprint to generate robust economic growth and community development. This initiative is focused on growing jobs, increasing regional wealth, driving private investment and reducing poverty. The State has already invested more than $3.4 billion in the region since 2012 to lay the groundwork for the plan which includes investing in key industries such as photonics, agriculture‎ and food production, and advanced manufacturing.  Today, unemployment is down to the lowest levels since before the Great Recession; personal and corporate income taxes are down; and businesses are choosing places like Rochester, Batavia and Canandaigua as a destination to grow and invest in as a result.

The $500 million “Finger Lakes Forward”Upstate Revitalization Initiative announced by Governor Cuomo in December 2015 will incentivize private business to invest well over $2.5 billion – and the region’s plan, as submitted, projects up to 8,200 new jobs. More information is available [here](http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/content/finger-lakes).​

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